

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON

RESTRICTED

TARIFFS AND TRADE

IDB/4

20 November 1989

Special Distribution

Integrated Data Base

SEMINAR/WORKSHOP OF 2-6 OCTOBER 1989

Note by the Secretariat

1. The GATT Secretariat organized a seminar/workshop during the week of 2 October 1989 at the request of the Informal Advisory Group (IAG) on the GATT Integrated Data Base (IDB). The purpose of the seminar was to give the Secretariat staff an opportunity to discuss with experts from capitals, the contents of the IDB submissions they are expected to prepare and to find solutions to problems encountered in coding the data. The seminar also provided an opportunity for specialists from capitals to inform the Secretariat of the current status of the preparation of their submissions, and for the Secretariat to indicate what were the minimum data required in order to facilitate the submissions of data.
2. The programme of the seminar was circulated in airgram GATT/AIR/UNNUMBERED dated 3 August 1989. The supporting documentation for the discussions was distributed in documents IDB/W/4 (Reference Manual for the Preparation of Data), IDB/W/4/Add.1 (List of Codes), IDB/W/5 (Application Computer Programs for the Analysis of the IDB Data), IDB/W/6 (IDB System Overview), IDB/W/6/Add.1 (Conversion Phase Control Messages) and IDB/Q/2 (List No. 2 of Outstanding Questions). Background documentation concerning the GATT Tariff Study and the facilities provided by the International Computing Centre (ICC), was also made available. The Secretariat also prepared a set of examples to illustrate various methods of recording IDB information, as well as three questionnaires: one on computer equipment available in the capitals and at the delegations in Geneva, another on data availability and a third on persons to be contacted on IDB-related matters in the capitals and in the delegations.
3. The seminar was attended by experts from thirty-four Contracting Parties. The list of participants is attached in Annex 1.
4. The Director-General addressed the participants in the seminar and emphasized the importance which the Secretariat places on the establishment of the IDB which should be the best possible tool for the analysis of trade policy measures for the benefit of both contracting parties and the Secretariat. The IDB should be a great opportunity to achieve a more sophisticated, a more precise and a fairer way to conduct trade policies. The Director-General also mentioned the possibility of GATT providing technical assistance, in so far as the IDB was concerned, to groups of

countries in the form of further seminars. He indicated that the requests for such seminars should be well documented. In this connection, and in the broader context of technical co-operation in support of trade liberalization, he recalled that he had discussed with other international organizations, the possibility of financing technical assistance in order to build up the capacity of governments to analyze multilateral trade policy issues.

5. The points discussed during the week and the proposals which were made are summarized in the following paragraphs.

General Description of the IDB

6. At the opening of the seminar, the Secretariat described the events which led to the establishment of the IDB including the Council decision and the setting up of the Informal Advisory Group. It was indicated that fifty-one Contracting Parties representing over 95 per cent of world merchandise trade, had decided to participate in the IDB. The Secretariat distributed a summary table outlining the status of the preparation of submissions broken down by submissions received and submissions expected. As of 1 October 1989, submissions had been received from thirteen countries plus the European Communities and submissions were expected from five additional countries. Following informal bilateral discussions held with delegations, submissions were expected from seven additional countries within the next twelve months. A tour de table was conducted to give participants an opportunity to update the information provided in the summary table.

7. The Secretariat gave a progress report on the status of the IDB applications development work and indicated what is planned for the near future. In addition, the Secretariat provided participants with an overview of the IDB including the contents of the files to be prepared by participants, the phases of processing of the submissions, a description of the facilities offered by the ICC, an indication of the storage capacities which would be required for the IDB and the number of staff working on the project development.

Discussions of data base input

8. The discussions on the formats and contents of the files which should be submitted were carried out on the basis of documents IDB/W/4, IDB/W/4/Add.1 and IDB/Q/2. Document IDB/Q/2 contained a list of questions raised by the Secretariat concerning the formats and the contents of the submissions.

9. In order to facilitate the early submission of the data by a large number of IDB participants, the Secretariat identified the minimum data which must be recorded in each of the submission files. These minimum data would be sufficient for the purpose of the analysis of the results of the Uruguay Round Negotiations and for the files to be processed by the conversion programs created by the Secretariat. It was emphasized that the provision of minimum data would be a short term means of creating a large degree of participation in the IDB. Over time, participants would be

expected to provide the full range of data requested for the IDB. The minimum data to be recorded in the files are summarized in the table reproduced in Annex 2.

10. Concerning the formats described in document IDB/W/4, the Secretariat mentioned that it was important that submissions be recorded using these formats, both in terms of record structures and data elements' formats, since the creation of ad hoc programs to process submissions deviating from the proposed formats would have an impact on the project development schedule.

(1) Inventory of data elements

(a) Import statistics

11. The import statistics file should contain annual imports in value and volume by country of origin in the detail of the customs tariff nomenclature. The minimum data which must be recorded in the import statistics file are the following: the tariff item number, the country of origin for imports, the c.i.f. or customs value of imports, the unit of quantity used, and the volume of imports.
12. The formats and contents of the import file were reviewed element by element. With regard to the codes identifying the type of tariff relation between the importing country and each of its suppliers and the tariff treatment to which the imports were effectively entitled, some delegations indicated that they had no difficulty in providing the information. Other delegations indicated that import data were not available in enough detail to be able to identify, for each country of origin, m.f.n. imports separately from preferential imports. The Secretariat indicated that trade aggregates would be calculated and physically recorded in the IDB. Since it was not certain at this stage that all participating countries would be in position to record the tariff treatment code, it was agreed that only trade aggregates according to the tariff relation would be initially recorded in the IDB. The possibility of recording trade aggregates according to the tariff treatment would be considered in view of the contents of the submissions received from participants. One delegation stated that the identification of imports which effectively benefited from preferences under the Generalized System of Preferences was important for developing countries in order to be able to assess their export potential in developed markets.
13. The format of the import file provides for the recording of two import values: the c.i.f. value and, where different, the customs value. Only the customs value (c.i.f. or other) will be recorded in the IDB. The reason for providing the two import values in the submissions is to retain the possibility of adjusting the data by the ratio of c.i.f. value to customs value for countries not using c.i.f. value as their customs value. This adjustment would allow for more precise comparisons to be made among countries collecting duties on different bases.

14. Duty collection can be recorded in the submissions if the data are readily available in the national statistics. Duty collection data will not be recorded in the IDB.
 15. The import value will be recorded in the IDB in both national currency and in US dollars. The conversion of national values to the dollar values will be done by the Secretariat, using the average annual exchange rate published by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). If the exchange rate was not available in the IMF publications, national sources or the trade-weighted average exchange rate used by the GATT Secretariat in the Annual Report would be used.
- (b) Coded part of the tariff file
16. The coded part of the tariff file contains for each customs tariff item, the m.f.n. duties (the GATT bound duty, the legal m.f.n. duty and the effectively applied m.f.n. duty) and the preferential duties applicable under the GSP, under free-trade area agreements or under other contractual preferential arrangements. The minimum data to be recorded in the coded part of the tariff file are the following: the tariff item number and, for each duty recorded, the type of duty (m.f.n. bound, legal or effectively applied), the duty rate in percentage, the binding status of the duty and an indication of the coverage of the binding (whether all products or selected products of the item are bound).
 17. The format and contents of the coded part of the tariff file were reviewed element by element. The following elements gave rise to questions which were discussed during the meeting.
 18. Concerning the period of validity which indicates at which date a duty came into force or ceased to be in force, the Secretariat had prepared examples of various ways in which the validity period could be used if data were to be stored in the IDB for more than one year. The Secretariat noted that in the initial submissions received, delegations had recorded the period of validity in different ways: in some submissions the start date was systematically recorded, in other submissions both the start date and the end date were systematically recorded, etc. The Secretariat indicated to delegations that it would be necessary to adopt a common way of recording the period of validity especially if, as envisaged, data were to be stored in the IDB for several years. Some delegations made very preliminary comments on the examples provided by the Secretariat. They mentioned that one reasonable solution to the problem could be to systematically record the start date of the validity period to indicate when the duty came into force and to record the end date only if there was a change either in the duty or in the customs tariff nomenclature during the reference year. It was agreed that this matter would be kept on the agenda of the IAG, where it should be further discussed.

19. With regard to the recording of tariff concessions offered during the Uruguay Round, it was agreed that the base duty for the negotiations would be recorded under duty type "09B" with an indication in the validity period of the date to which the base duty referred. The duty offered as a concession would be recorded under duty type "09F" with an indication in the validity period of the date at which the concession would be fully implemented. Delegations considered that, if the concessions were to be implemented by stages over several years, it would not be necessary to record the intermediary stages of reductions, since this would substantially increase the volume of the file and would complicate the maintenance and the retrieval of the data.
20. Concerning specific, compound and mixed duties, some delegations considered that it would not be necessary to provide ad valorem equivalents (AVEs) of the base and offered duties since their levels could be compared using the duty recorded in the element "normalized coding".
21. With regard to the duties applicable to products covered by the Agreement on Trade in Civil Aircraft, some delegations indicated that separate tariff items had been created in their customs tariff to identify civil aircraft products. Other delegations stated that although civil aircraft products were not identified as separate items in their customs tariff, import statistics on these products were available. The Secretariat had proposed in document IDB/Q/2, that where separate items did not exist in the customs tariff, the duty applicable under the civil aircraft agreement be recorded under duty type "04" with an indication in the element duty coverage, where applicable, that the duty did not apply to all products of the tariff item. This matter should be further discussed in the IAG.
22. The information recorded in the import file and in the tariff file should use the same nomenclature for each tariff item. While some delegations collect import statistics in the detail of the customs tariff, other delegations cannot identify import statistics for each duty in their customs tariff. The Secretariat had proposed that, in the latter case, the tariff items be recorded as sub-items, using the tariff suffix. In order to associate a duty to the import statistics item, an average duty of the sub-items' duties would be calculated. Delegations indicated that the simple arithmetic average was not accurate and could not be used in any analyses of the information. The estimated trade-weighted average would be preferable. One delegation considered that imports should be provided in the exact detail of the customs tariff and therefore, that the tariff suffix should never be used. The Secretariat indicated that the tariff suffix would be retained in the format of the file and that its use would be further discussed in the IAG if necessary, in view of the contents of the submissions.

23. Concerning the ad valorem equivalents of specific duties (AVEs), it had been previously agreed that AVEs would be calculated in capitals. The method used to calculate AVEs could therefore be different from one country to another and should be indicated in the code provided for that purpose in the format of the file. If AVEs were to be used in the comparison of tariff levels among countries, it would be necessary to also record AVEs calculated using a method common to all countries. The Secretariat will amend the format to include a field to record AVEs calculated using the common method, when and if such a method can be agreed upon.
 24. With regard to preferential duties applying to a group of countries, the partner code recorded would identify the group and it would not be necessary to record the information for all individual member countries of the group for the duty concerned.
 25. Other changes proposed in document IDB/Q/2 will be made with regard to the various codes attached to each duty. The letter "B" will be recorded in the binding code to identify bound duties. The letter "A" will be recorded in the nature code to identify ad valorem duties. The Secretariat noted that the conversion programs for the coded tariff file have a facility to change the binding and nature codes to these new values. Furthermore, it will be possible to record the letter "X" in the partial duty coverage code for any type of duty, whether m.f.n. or preferential.
- (c) Textual part of the tariff file
26. The textual part of the tariff file contains product descriptions for all customs tariff items whether bound or unbound and, for bound items, the information notified to GATT in the national loose-leaf schedules of concessions. The minimum data which must be recorded in the textual part of the tariff file are the following: the tariff line number, the element number, the sequence number, the lines of text of the product descriptions and the initial negotiating rights (INRs) on the current bound duties.
 27. Since the elements of this file are of variable lengths, the length of each record was to be recorded in the record length field. Due to technical considerations, the information recorded in this field could not always be used and the actual length of each record is now calculated in the conversion programs. Therefore, it is no longer necessary to provide the record length and if not provided, this field should be recorded as "00000".
 28. The recording of the legal product descriptions was discussed both during the meeting and informally with individual delegations. A problem encountered by delegations was the insertion of descriptions of headings and sub-headings in a logical sequence within the customs tariff nomenclature. The Secretariat proposed two possible solutions to this problem which

were illustrated in the examples of various methods of recording IDB information. Both of these solutions involved altering the customs tariff nomenclature and the introduction of fictitious tariff items for headings. A third solution in which the level of headings would be included in the textual tariff file key was proposed by two delegations in informal discussions with the Secretariat. This solution which does not alter the customs tariff nomenclature was retained and is explained in Annex 3.

29. Concerning INRs, the Secretariat indicated that the 3-digit ISO code used to identify countries in the IDB would also be used to identify countries holding INRs, instead of the two-letter country abbreviation as previously proposed. This change would not affect the manner in which countries have coded or will code the INRs in the submissions, since the conversion phase programs would perform the necessary code conversion. Similarly, INRs could be retrieved or printed on reports using either the two-letter country abbreviation, the three-letter country abbreviation or the 3-digit ISO country code.
30. With regard to the information submitted in the loose-leaf schedules, this subject is currently being discussed in various GATT forums and the necessary elements to be recorded will reflect the decisions taken in these forums.

(d) Non-tariff files

31. The coded non-tariff file contains, at this stage, information on quantitative restrictions (QRs) in the detail of the customs tariff nomenclature. The minimum data to be recorded in the coded non-tariff file are the following: the tariff item, the non-tariff suffix (where applicable), the country or group of countries affected by the restriction, the type of measure and the measure code.
32. The textual non-tariff file contains product descriptions for tariff items which are partially covered by a measure. These product descriptions should be recorded for those items in the coded non-tariff file having the non-tariff suffix informed. The minimum data to be recorded are the following: the tariff item number, the non-tariff suffix, the sequence number of the text lines and the product description.
33. The formats and contents of the non-tariff files were reviewed element by element.
34. Concerning the points raised in IDB/Q/2 on the coding of GATT documents and Articles, the Secretariat had proposed a standard list of codes as reproduced in document IDB/W/4/Add.1, to be used by delegations in the recording of these two elements in their submissions. Should delegations need to record documents or Articles which were not in the list of codes, the Secretariat indicated that they could create their own codes. Provided that

a list of these new codes were communicated to the Secretariat along with the QR submission, the Secretariat would create standard codes for these documents and Articles and the conversion programs would change the "national" document and Article codes to the standard codes. Delegations agreed to this method of recording document and Article codes.

35. One delegation requested that a code be added to the coded non-tariff file format to indicate that a measure had been developed at the tariff line level from a single measure applying to a group of products. The Secretariat indicated that it would investigate the possibility of recording this new data element and that this point should be discussed in the IAG.

(2) Application programs for the analysis of IDB data

36. The Secretariat recalled that application programs to be developed by the Secretariat had already been discussed in previous meetings of the IAG. Delegations had requested the Secretariat to create for the IDB the programs which currently exist for the analysis of the Tariff Study data. In addition, delegations had made suggestions with regard to other types of reports which might be useful for the analysis of IDB data.

37. The discussions on the application programs took place on the basis of document IDB/W/5, which contained examples of reports which had been defined by a group of government experts in the late 1960's for the analysis of the tariff situation before the Tokyo Round.

38. As shown in document IDB/W/5, the Secretariat intended to create two types of application programmes: detailed analyses at the tariff line level and summary analyses by six-digit, four-digit or two-digit headings of the HS nomenclature or by broad product categories.

39. With regard to the detailed analyses, the information would be reported at the tariff line level to analyse bilateral trade flows or trade flows between a given import market and groups of suppliers. The information would relate to imports, tariffs, INRs and non-tariff measures. In order to reduce the volume of information to be extracted, it would be possible to select individual tariff lines, tariff lines within selected headings of the HS nomenclature or tariff lines selected according to various criteria. These criteria could be: the value of imports, the share and/or rank of a given supplier, the level of the duty, the existence of INRs or the existence of quantitative restrictions, etc. The output of the detailed analyses could be displayed on a terminal screen, copied on tape or personal computer (PC) diskettes or printed on paper. Each request for a detailed analysis could be stored for reuse in order to produce similar analyses on different import markets or for different suppliers.

40. The summary analyses proposed in document IDB/W/5 were reviewed in detail. Concerning the first three summary reports showing tariff averages and imports by six-digit and four-digit HS headings and by product categories, one delegation indicated that it would be useful to identify in each report, the number of tariff lines where the duty was not available in

percentage terms. Concerning the analysis of the binding situation, the Secretariat mentioned that the proposed report was very preliminary and would certainly have to be revised in the light of the discussions in the Negotiating Group on Tariffs, especially with regard to the procedure to be agreed upon for giving credit for bindings in the negotiations.

41. Concerning the methodology to be used in analytical reports, the Secretariat reviewed some of the points which might have to be further discussed in future meetings of the IAG.

IDB System Overview

42. The Secretariat presented an overview of the three phases of the processing of a submission from its receipt in the Secretariat to its dissemination to users. The discussion was based on document IDB/W/6.

43. The conversion phase consists of the analysis of the submission files in terms of contents and formats, the identification of errors and the conversion of submission codes and formats to IDB standard codes and formats. The functions of the conversion phase application programs, along with the various controls applied, were explained in detail by the Secretariat. Examples of most of the reports produced by these programs as well as copies of the slides used in the presentation were distributed. The various reference and support files used by the programs were also reviewed.

44. In the work data base (WIDB) phase, the converted files would be stored in the WIDB, where errors identified in the conversion phase would be corrected by means of an update program, and a final checking program would verify the consistency of information recorded in the various files before the submission would be transferred to the user IDB. The Secretariat described the system design and the various possibilities of updating the WIDB files. The controls to be applied in the final checking program were also reviewed. Examples of the reports to be produced by the update program were distributed.

45. In the user data base phase, the submissions would be stored in the user IDB and made available to users. In addition to a description of the application programs to be developed for the analysis of the IDB information, the Secretariat gave some preliminary information on the manner in which the information would be made available to users. Data could be disseminated on magnetic tapes containing either "print-like" files, sequential files using the IDB standard formats, or Adabas files. PC diskettes using various formatting standards could also be used. For users connected to the ICC, on-line queries in which information would be presented at the tariff line level, as well as a facility to transfer information from the IDB to the end-user's equipment would be made available.

46. Concerning the information to be disseminated on magnetic tapes and PC diskettes, the Secretariat indicated that it would be necessary to define selection criteria in order to keep the volume of information within manageable proportions. This would be especially important when using

personal computers since a large number of diskettes might be needed to store the required information. The Secretariat indicated that an additional means of reducing the number of PC diskettes required could be the use of PC data-compression software. However, the use of this software would only be possible if the same software was available on the end-user's PC, in order to be able to decompress the data.

47. Concerning dissemination of IDB information on PC diskettes, the Secretariat indicated that specific formats would need to be defined for each of the IDB files. Questionnaires on equipment available in the capitals and at the delegations in Geneva were completed by most of the participants in the seminar. These questionnaires will assist the Secretariat in defining common possibilities for data dissemination and in establishing a framework for the development of PC application software for the IDB.

48. The Secretariat explained how a computer connection to the ICC could be established from a capital or a delegation, via PC's or terminals. Information was given on required equipment, telecommunication facilities and ICC policy. Delegations interested in such a connection were advised to contact the ICC directly for more information.

Conclusion of the seminar

49. In closing, it was stressed that the minimum list of items to be recorded in IDB submissions was not only a means to increase the participation rate in the IDB but was also a means of satisfying a request from a number of contracting parties to monitor the substantive phase of the negotiations starting in March 1990.

50. To meet these Uruguay Round requirements while continuing to work on the development of the IDB System, the Secretariat suggested that at the outset, a more limited set of variables could be supplied for IDB purposes, since it would be technically possible to convert these data to the Tariff Study format for use by Contracting Parties in connection with the Uruguay Round. The need to convert to the Tariff Study format, in order to disseminate both the raw data and analytical results, stems from the fact that the application systems for the IDB have yet to be developed, but are available for the Tariff Study files.

51. In this regard, the following groups of countries can be defined:

- (a) countries which have not yet implemented the Harmonized System and will therefore negotiate using the CCCN-based nomenclature. Of the five countries in this group which are participating in the Tariff Study, two have yet to submit their 1988 data under CCCN;
- (b) countries which have already made partial submissions to the IDB and will conduct their negotiations using the HS nomenclature. These countries would have their data converted to the format of the Tariff Study. This exercise would not be undertaken until written approval is received from the countries concerned.

Furthermore, under no circumstances would the information be released outside the GATT Statistics and Information Systems Division, until written approval was received;

- (c) other countries which have been asked to submit to the IDB, as soon as possible, the minimum list of data using the HS nomenclature starting with the coded tariff file. GATT is prepared to accept less than a full year of import statistics. Here again, the same restrictions would apply on the release of information.

52. With regard to the above, the Secretariat undertook to follow-up with each delegation individually.

ANNEX 1/ANNEXE 1

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ANNEX 2

IDB

Minimum Data to be Recorded in the Submissions⁽¹⁾

<u>Variables</u>	Import Statistics File	Coded Tariff File	Textual Tariff File	Foot- note Text File	Coded Non- Tariff File	Textual Non- Tariff File
Tariff Item Number	X	X	X		X	X
Non-Tariff Suffix					X	X
Partner Country/ Country Affected	X				X	
C.i.f. or Customs Value	X					
Quantity Unit Code	X					
Quantity	X					
Duty Type (mfn/GSP)		X				
AVE (global only)		X				
Binding Status		X				
Partial Binding Coverage		X				
Element number			X			
Sequence Number			X			X
Text (Product description)			X			X
Type of Measure (imports and/or exports)					X	
Measure Code					X	
INR's on Present Concession			X			

(1) The list was developed to facilitate the submission of data to GATT.
The other variables identified in IDB/W/4 are still required for the IDB
to fulfill the requirements of Contracting Parties.

ANNEX 3

Recording of Tariff Heading Descriptions in the Textual Tariff File:

Element "02" of the Textual Tariff file contains a two-digit field to record the level of the product description.

- The level of tariff headings for HS 2-digit, HS 4-digit, HS 5-digit and HS 6-digit should be equal to the number of digits recorded in the tariff heading - "02" for chapter headings, "04" for 4-digit headings, etc.
- The level of any other tariff headings can be recorded using the values of "07" through "98" at the discretion of the country concerned.
- The level of the descriptions of tariff lines should be recorded as "99". If a country has already recorded tariff line descriptions with "00" in the level, this need not be changed since level "00" will be automatically changed to "99" by the IDB conversion program.

The Secretariat will modify the conversion programs to incorporate the level into the key of the textual tariff file. There will be no change in the submission formats but the IDB standard format will now have the level recorded in the sub-element of element "02" as follows:

Submission format				IDB standard format			
Element	Sub-element (Lang- uage	Seq. no.)	Level	Element	Sub- element	Lang- uage	Seq. no.
length: (2)	(1)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(1)	(2)
02	L	XX	LV	02	LV	L	XX

where "L" is the language code, "XX" is the sequence number of the text lines and "LV" is the level of element "02". Therefore it will be possible to use the same tariff line number for a heading and for a tariff line as shown in the following example:

ANNEXE 3

Tariff No.	Description	Duty
	Level Text	
8481	04 Taps, cocks, valves ...	10%
84811000	99 - Pressure-reducing ...	10%
84812000	99 - Valves for ...	10%
84813000	99 - Check valves	10%
84814000	99 - Safety or ...	10%
848180	06 - Other appliances:	
84818010	99 -- Inner tube valves ...	10%
84818021	08 -- Other:	
84818021	09 --- Taps and valves for kitchens ...	
84818021	99 ---- Mixing taps	10%
84818022	99 ---- Other	10%
84818023	09 --- Taps and valves for central	
84818023	99 ---- Thermostatic	10%
84818024	99 ---- Other	10%
84818025	09 --- Regulators:	
84818025	99 ---- Heating ...	10%
84818026	99 ---- Level ...	10%
84818027	99 ---- Other	10%
84818028	09 --- Wedge-gate valves:	10%

It should be borne in mind that the logic of the numbering system used should allow for the possible inclusion of additional levels in the future. For example, should it be required to insert an additional heading between 84818021 " -- Other" (level "08") and "Taps and valves for kitchens" (level "09"), it would be necessary to change the existing level "09" headings to level "10", and to record the new heading as level "09". Therefore it might be preferable to leave some gaps in the values assigned to the level to be able to accommodate future requirements.